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Facts you should know

By Will Nicholls

The Cree world is never one you can stand back and fully understand. It is like the many rivers our ancestors used for highways. A wise man once said a river is a place where every step you take is new. I guess that's the rushing water and all that.

It's not that simple though when you look at the problems First Nations face in Canada. Our children are more likely to end up in jail than get a high-school diploma when one looks at Statistics Canada's figures. It shouldn't come as a surprise when you consider that one in four children in First Nation communities live in poverty. Hungry children can't learn when their minds are focused on food. Sometimes there isn't even the opportunity to access education easily. Some 40 First Nation communities are without schools here in Canada.

Poverty is to be expected when you consider the average unemployment rate for on-reserve First Nations average about 25% (2006 Stats). The same stats showed the average household income was $15,958 and when you consider the population boom the results are frightening. On top of this, the Feds have changed the food-subsidy programs for the Northern communities. Given limited employment and economic opportunities in remote areas we can only wonder at what the future fallout will be in terms of further widening the gap between Natives and non-Natives in Canada.

An opportunity for change though exists for First Nations. Yes, we are Banana Republics in the sense that all we have are natural resources and the frontier of exploitation is moving ever further north. One only has to examine the Plan Nord to understand that the desire to occupy the North is more than politics, it's also profit driven. Look at the potential mines and the new roads Cree will see encroaching deeper and deeper into Eeyou Istchee. I'm sure the forestry companies will enjoy the benefits of easier access.

Companies, such as Cree Crown corporations like the Cree Construction and Development Company and other individually owned Cree companies, can create jobs, make profits and gain expertise and experience. We know that the Banana Republic economy can't last as some mines will only have a life of 10 or so years. Counting the building time of five years and the shutdown and reclamation period, we might add another seven years.

If we look at the example of Cree Construction, though, our potential growth is greater. They have shown us that the dollars can flow back to the North. Right now money from resource exploitation for the most part goes to the South. Every Cree who is employed or has a company buys in his or her community. The dollars fuel our needs and ensure more people work whether it is in stores, restaurants and supply-and-service companies, for example.

Our youth need to understand there are opportunities and a future, but you have to have the education and training to make it happen. Our quality of life can improve while affirming our rights. All First Nations must become involved to ensure a fair and equitable future that not only means participation but decision-making in what the future will be for them and their descendants.

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Medical mysteries

By Sonny Orr

The plane readied for takeoff and I turned to the passenger next to me, a doctor who had been around the North for two decades. As the plane droned at cruise altitude, he turned to me to talk about the good old days, when the North was still a frontier, somewhat akin to the Wild West of the last century, except there were no horses that could live up here, no cowboys and Indians either. My new friend, Doc, was eager to bring up the way things were done back then.

Back in the day, the only way to get around anywhere was by air. Everything was done by air transport and many times, the only way to get a desperate patient from the frozen North to any medical facility in the far south. I first met Doc when he was still young and fresh from his home country of Vietnam. At first, I mistook him for a local person, until he started talking and pulling out his stethoscope from his huge parka and checking out the patient at the clinic. I was there to deliver mail and cargo and by accident, came upon him and his patient, who was quite feverish and sickly looking. I headed back to the airstrip to ready the waiting aircraft for the regular schedule to the south.

After the plane took off, I got a call from Doc, who was worried about his patient, and on his first day of his job, didn't have any routine to follow. I made a quick assessment of the situation and recommended that he send his patient to Montreal for immediate medical attention. But, he stammered, the plane is gone now and what can we do about that? I called the plane back and told him that it was better to do that and incur the wrath of the pilots than to face a saddened family at a funeral in a few days. Doc quickly understood the consequences and listened to my sage advice. Today, that man is still alive, but what his ailment was is I still don't know.

Doc talked about his later years and all the hardships of living in the North. For quite awhile, we talked about the local solution to sewage, which was affectionately called the honey bucket. We were not sure if it was easier to deal with the honey bucket in the warm months, or during the cold winter season, where the contents of the honey bucket would freeze nearly instantly, only to emerge later on in the spring. Doc eventually moved to another community where he confessed, that there were two reasons why he left the far North – flushing toilets and green trees.

After all those decades of serving the people and all the different maladies that Doc had to face simply pale in comparison with the problems that reflect the woes of today. When an aspirin was the only remedy for a headache, today that headache is managed and controlled with strong medication. For major incidents, it often meant a long plane ride to Val-d'Or or Montreal with a nurse on hand. Often, the nurse would reappear in the community the next day, still fighting fatigue and sleeplessness and knocking back coffee like it was water in a desert. To Doc, it is just another day of healing and treating people. Today, the medical industry in the North is a major, yet underfunded sector. Perhaps, prevention is the best medicine.

I finally reach my destination and my tired friend Doc wishes me well and thanks for the memories of the wild, wild North. I noticed that yet another medivac was on the tarmac of the airport, with another medical mystery.

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Grads at last

Mistissini celebrates their first two high-school grads since 2006

By Amy German

Geraldine Shecapio and Jessica Jolly got their own special graduation bash in Mistissini on September 2 when teachers and staff pulled out all the stops for the two teenagers. While the community may have only been celebrating two graduates, according to their principal they were the first two grads to come out of Voyageur Memorial School since 2006.

"I am so proud of the two, I am beyond proud! I keep saying that they are my first two since they really are the first two students who have graduated since I have been here," said Principal Judith Michel.

According to Michel, there is a major hope that Shecapio and Jolly's graduation may be the event that bucks the trend and that the community will start seeing more graduates. Mistissini had not seen any graduates come out of the local high-school program since 2006.

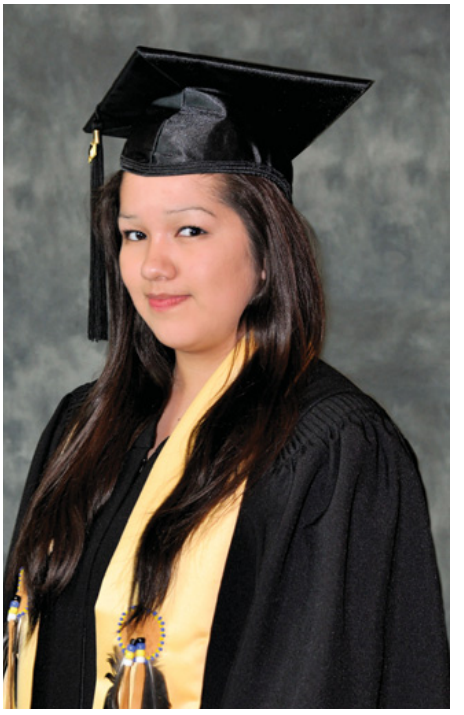
"We had this big graduation just for two students and while some people said that they are just two, I kept saying that no, they are THE TWO. They are the two who will be turning things around now for us," said Michel.

This year Voyager Memorial has a total of 13 students who could potentially graduate in the spring of 2012.

So, in celebrating their success, Secondary 1 and 2 teacher Betty Anne Forward decided to team up with other Voyageur Memorial staff members to ensure that the two girls had a memorable celebration to commemorate the special event.

"We had a really nice celebration for them. All of the teaching staff and all of the family members and friends who they had invited came together for this event. Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff was there and acted as the emcee for the evening. We did everything these girls wanted. They wanted lasagna so we even had a caterer make it for this special event," said Forward.

Geraldine Shecapio



Jessica Jolly

Forward ensured that the two girls were each given beautiful handmade sashes with Native adornments to wear over their graduation robes as a special celebration of the event.

One of the girls' Secondary 5 teachers, Bethany Dooley, even flew in from Newfoundland just for a few hours to attend the event in honour of the two. Dooley had to fly back out that night but made the effort because their graduation was so monumental.

"She (Dooley) told me that she was really proud of both of us and always knew that we would do it," said Shecapio.

In her graduation speech, Shecapio thanked each of the teachers who had helped her along the way to success, getting each one to stand up and accept applause out of her gratitude.

"I feel really proud of myself. It is something that I have wanted to accomplish since I was a kid and it feels really good to graduate so that I can do something that I have wanted to do," said Shecapio, now away to study in the Pathways program at Heritage College in Gatineau.

Shecapio's co-graduate Jolly had to attend summer school to be able to graduate but persevered to also have her moment in the sun. She too is now away in Val-d'Or attending Cégep.

"I feel like this is a really big accomplishment. It was hard but it's the kind of thing that if you keep working at it you will get it done," said Jolly.

Jolly also credited her school success to her teachers and her parents in particular. She said she was grateful to her mother for getting her up every morning and her father for supporting her through the whole process. She is hopeful that her younger brother who is now in Secondary 5 will also graduate like she did come spring of 2012.

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On behalf of the Board of Compensation and CREECO, I would like to congratulate CCDC on 35 years of success and building the Cree Nation. As a recognized leader in construction, not only in Eeyou Istchee, but across Canada, it has been clearly proven that Cree leadership, vision and goals has its place in today's economy.
CCDC has been truly instrumental in the development of our people by hiring, training, promoting and supporting our people in the construction industry.
As shareholders', each and every Cree beneficiary can be proud of our company! We wish you continued success and prosperity.
Jack R. Blacksmith
Chairman of the Board of Compensation and President of CREECO
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Everything's changing

A report on climate change in Eeyou Istchee underlines the transforming environment

By Akiva Levitas

It is easy to get lost in the big picture of climate change. We are always being bombarded by news telling us about the effects of climate change halfway around the world and sometimes we forget about the changes happening in our own backyards. As such, the Cree are not exempt from the global issue of climate change. A lot of what we are seeing happen now, all the extreme weather, is connected to the fact that the global climate is changing. As a result, the Cree Nation must work to adapt to these changes.

A recent report by the Climate Change Project, titled "Climate Change in Eeyou Istchee: Identification of Impacts and Adaptation Measures for the Cree Hunters, Trappers and Communities", notes that there will be "an average increase in warming of 3.5 – 6.5 degrees by 2050". With the increase in temperature more notable in the winter means more rainfall and thinner ice with earlier break-ups. Trails will need to be redrawn because of the shifting weather conditions. What was once safe is now becoming more and more treacherous. The usage of helicopters to travel will increase causing strains on budgets.

In 2009, the Climate Change Project began as an initiative to help understand how the climate change was affecting Eeyou Istchee from a Cree point-of-view. By working with the locals, the project set out to document all of the changes that were directly affecting the Native communities between 2009 and 2011. With that accomplished, the project would begin to raise awareness amongst the locals to better prepare the James Bay Cree to the changing environment.

The project was a joint two-year initiative of the Cree Trappers' Association (CTA), the James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment (JBACE) and the Cree Regional Authority (CRA) along with the participation of three Cree communities – Mistissini, Waskaganish and Whapmagoostui. Local tallymen and members of the CTA also took part in the project providing first-hand knowledge of the changes.

The Climate Change Project conducted two workshops in 2009 and 2010 with the participation of 135 residents who reported about a thousand observations on the effects of climate change.

With all of these collected observations, the researchers began drawing up recommendations based on the community's needs. In total, they came up with four proposals. The first suggestion is to establish climate-change committees to serve the region in order to give the locals the ability to discuss and confront each challenge.

> "NEW ANIMAL SPECIES – SUCH AS THE COUGAR, COYOTE AND TURKEY VULTURE – HAVE BEGUN MAKING INROADS IN THE EEYOU ISTCHEE FROM THE SOUTH."

Special Projects Coordinator Rick Cuciurean stated, "To plan ahead, we have to get people to [actively] survey. If they find new plants or animals, anyone can send in the observations to the Cree Geoportal." (www.creegeoportal.ca)

Many of the observations painted an image of a changing way of life. For starters, people used to be able to forecast the weather just by looking at the sky, but now this has become unpredictable. The softer snow and the thinner ice make it harder to travel to the traplines and maintain the hunting camps. More and more locals are resorting to building airstrips near their camps because travelling by skidoo has become too dangerous. This rising use of helicopters puts an increased strain on the local CTA as it has to heavily subsidize the usage in order to continue this practice.

Another aspect of climate change is how animals have also been affected. The wildlife has already started adapting to these changes with a noted difference in behaviour as well as the taste of the meat shifting. What's more, new animal species – such as the cougar, coyote and turkey vulture – have begun making inroads in the Eeyou Istchee from the south.

The next step is to implement a community-based system for observing the environment and to help document the changes happening around the communities. The Cree Geoportal is an important tool that was created for the purpose of community monitoring.

The establishment of ice monitoring and safety programs were raised during the workshops. The decrease in ice thickness and shorter seasons means that travelling overland is getting dangerous. These programs will be working with the Cree School Board to make sure the youth are aware of these changing travel conditions.

The last recommendation is about the next generation and how to get young people involved in climate monitoring and research programs. In order for this to happen, the project suggests creating internships, scholarships and employment opportunities in the field.

The choice we have to make now is if we want our grandchildren to look back and say we were the generation that stood up to protect their future or we just pushed the problems off onto them. The project has applied for more funding in order to continue its research into 2012. The issue of climate change is a huge one but hopefully one we can overcome.

Congratulations to CCDC for 35 years of success

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Cree Nation Youth Council Business Symposium on the horizon

The Cree Youth Business Symposium is going to be held October 25-27 at the Hotel Forestel in Val-d'Or for the first time.

According to Jeremy Diamond, the Communications Officer for the Cree Nation Youth Council (CNYC), the idea behind it is to build up the business leaders of today and the future within the Cree Nation. The CNYC wants to promote youth entrepreneurship through this event.

"We attended the young entrepreneurs' symposium that was organized by the Dream Catcher Charitable Organization in Vancouver. It totally blew us away and was so life-changing for all of the young people there and so we got the idea from that," said Diamond.

The event that the CNYC is planning will serve as a symposium as well as a business contest where youth will participate in challenges to formulate different business strategies for sales, marketing, investing and other related issues that entrepreneurs face. According to Diamond, this is an event for youth in business and also youth aspiring for entrepreneurial careers.

"This event is really about inspiring the young people," said Diamond.

All those interested in attending should inquire within their local youth departments to find out more about attending the event.

Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council pays tribute to Lucien Wabanonik

After the announcement of his retirement from Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council (AANTC), the council paid tribute to the outgoing Grand Chief during its assembly on August 30-31.

According to the AANTC, Lucien Wabanonik devoted a great deal of energy and effort to the causes and the interests of the Algonquin Nation, and the Chiefs and elected representatives of the council acknowledged his contribution to the recognition of the Algonquin people.

Wabanonik was most noted for the delegation he led on behalf of the AANTC communities to Ottawa in April 2010 for the deposition of the Nitakinan declaration and the presentation of the map of the Algonquin ancestral territory.

Vice Grand Chief Marlene Jerome will serve as acting Grand Chief to complete Wabanonik's term, which finishes in 2012.

Greenpeace up in arms about Plan Nord conservation areas

Greenpeace blogger Nicholas Mainville called out Quebec Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks Pierre Arcand recently over a promise to protect 600,000 km² of land in the north through the Plan Nord project.

While the province's Plan Nord project for natural resource development in the north has previously outlined that 50% of the total area developed will be reserved for environmental and biodiversity purposes, according to Mainville, consultation documents for the Plan show that only 12% will see actual protection.

Instead, Mainville said that 38% of these lands will see no permanence in their protection as the ministry will be able to change the status of these areas should industry decide that they would like to develop an area of land for forestry, mineral extraction or other industrial activity. In total, he is claiming that the Quebec government will allow for up to 88% of the north to be developed for industrial use.

For more info: www.greenpeace.org

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com

35 Years of Cree Construction

By Amy German and Will Nicholls

The Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC), the first totally Cree-owned enterprise, is celebrating its 35th year in business. It grew out of a need for housing in the Eastern James Bay Cree communities. But it has grown since those early days to become more than what the Crees envisioned. Today CCDC is a nationally recognized company involved in many projects in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

As it gained experience and expertise it went on to build roads and infrastructure. It did renovation and maintenance work as well as some environmental projects.

In 2009-2011, CCDC will have trained over 400 Crees in the various industry related jobs.

Some Crees who worked for the company used the experience and knowledge they gained to start their own companies. It is something that the CCDC is proud of and it has reason to be.

The company has helped to create part of a larger and healthier Cree economy through employment and the potential spin-offs from projects it undertakes. One only has to compare past and present unemployment figures to know that the CCDC is a viable and necessary part of the Cree Nation.

The last fiscal year saw a net profit of almost $9 million for the CCDC. Its sister company ADC made only $72,486 but it has been touted as a company to look out for. Profit magazine recognized the CCDC as one of Canada's fastest growing companies and it is the first Native-owned company to make the Profit 100 list.

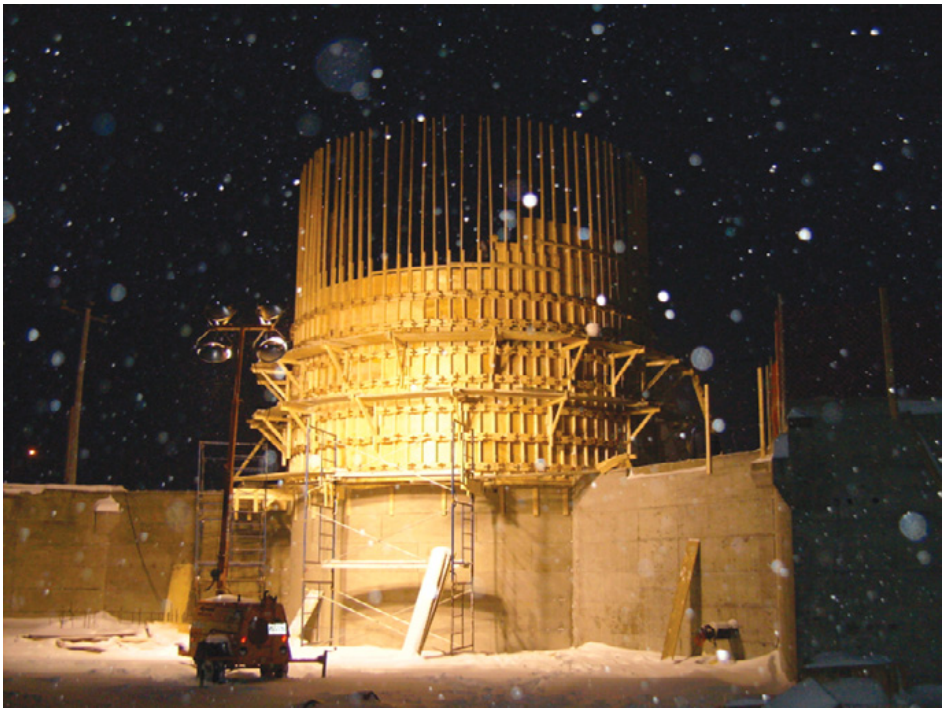
The people behind the organization

The Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC) has come a long way since its humble origins as a small company that performed clear cutting.

From millions to mega millions in business annually, CCDC is a homegrown Cree success story. But where would it be without the major minds and go-getters who stand behind the organization.

Digging deeper, the Nation wanted to get a closer look at those behind the scenes either working directly for CCDC, working in conjunction with them at the parent entity, CREECO, or those working alongside the construction giant to ensure that Crees get the training they need to fill the available jobs.

These are their stories and insights into what CCDC is and why, year after year, this Cree-owned, -operated and -driven organization is a resounding success.



Wemindji Clinic

William MacLeod, CCDC President

According to company president William MacLeod, CCDC is a two-fold organization with one hand focusing on the community and industrial projects that have been the company's bread and butter for the last 35 years. These projects include housing, community infrastructure, such as sewage and roads, the construction of local institutions that include clinics, schools and municipal buildings and then other commercial buildings. Outside of the community, CCDC has gained a pristine reputation building projects for Hydro-Québec and also in highway construction, having built the Route du Nord.

At the same time, CCDC is looking to move with the times as – thanks to the province's Plan Nord for natural resource development – a massive mining boom is about to hit the James Bay region and it is CCDC that will be leading the way when it comes to making these projects happen.

"We have to tackle this opportunity and be ready for it and that's exactly what we are gearing ourselves towards," stated MacLeod.

"We are already looking at the construction aspect of these projects. The mines need to be built and so do the buildings, roads and airports as well as all of the other required infrastructure. We are ready to do that particular project whether it is under Cree Construction or a joint venture process. We're even ready to do the catering services.

"At the same time, we are also looking into the mining aspects of this as there is interest there. One particular company has already asked us if we would be capable of doing extraction," said MacLeod.

MacLeod said the CCDC is interested in the prospect of carrying out mining extraction since it is similar to what they have already done, but it would require a significant capital investment as the machinery required for this kind of work runs at about $1 million a pop.

At the same time, the kinds of projects slated to happen within Eeyou Istchee all are looking at about 25 years of operation and so this kind of long-term commitment is the type of enticement that the CCDC needs to take the plunge into new areas.

In a sense it seems logical as the CCDC already has its catering and janitorial services company, Gestion ADC, vying for contracts within the mining camps for camp management and catering contracts. While this may result in joint venture projects through ADC, the CCDC is almost guaranteed to get a piece of every pie.

At the same time, the CCDC's opportunities for expansion seem limitless as it is being pursued by other First Nations within Quebec and across Canada that are experiencing their own natural-resource development booms. With projects already underway in other provinces, the CCDC is in demand not only for the quality work it does but also because of what it can do for a First Nation when it comes to sharing knowledge.

"We have been asked by other First Nations for assistance because we have 35 years of experience in the business of construction and catering. They want us to help them in those particular fields, be it for mining, hydro development, construction or other long-term projects. All of the stuff that has been happening in Eeyou Istchee for so long is now happening in these other communities and they don't have the resources or know-how so they are looking to an Aboriginal company that has the experience.

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"While it took us 35 years to get here, they would like to do it in a shorter time. Whether that can be done, I don't know, but we are more than willing to help," said MacLeod.

When it comes to a company like the CCDC, it is important to look at just how much the company has grown in its 35 years and exactly what they have accomplished since 1976.

In the beginning, the CCDC took on contracts on behalf of the Crees since that was what was mandated within the Agreements that the Cree had negotiated with the Crown, province and Hydro-Québec, but now the company has far surpassed the work that was simply reserved for it. Today the Cree entity competes with mainstream businesses, wins contracts and makes major profits that go back into the Cree nation.

MacLeod said half of the contracts that the CCDC worked on came from the public-bidding process and that last year, about 70% those contracts came from bids for work that the company originally made.

The CCDC isn't just bidding against other construction companies from the Cree world, but also against mainstream companies that carry out work throughout the province. The same goes for Gestion ADC, which is winning out against major companies like Sodexco and ESS Compass.

Employing sometimes 500 people at a time during peak seasons and handling $100 million worth in contracts annually, MacLeod said the CCDC does so much when it comes to employee development that it creates a lot of its own competition.

This is because, someone who joins the company as a labourer will be trained and learn to do his/her job with confidence and then move up the company ladder. At a certain point that onetime labourer may be confident enough to leave and become an independent contractor, something that MacLeod sees as a good thing.

"Some of them have become specialized in their own specific fields, like housing, and others become general contractors. They become our competition at a local level or they become a sub-contractor or even work with us on a consortium basis. In the long run, it actually fulfills the CCDC's mission as we are developing people in the entrepreneurship field and that's what we have been doing in the past," said MacLeod.

While the CCDC has physically built a great deal of the Cree communities, it has also formed many of the individuals who are standing strong within the communities today.

Infrastructure, Wemindi (Qc)

CCDC Presidential Profile, William MacLeod

William MacLeod is a James Bay Cree, born on the land and raised in Mistissini. He lives in his community and is married with four children and is a proud grandfather. He started his contributions to his community by serving the Cree Nation of Mistissini as councillor for four years and was later elected Deputy Chief for two years. He continued his local involvement with Mistissini as its Executive Director for seven years and Director of Community Development for four years and Treasurer for two. Today, he is serving as a councillor once again.

MacLeod has always had a close relationship with the land and this is reflected in the positions he has held as Wildlife Conservation Officer for the Quebec government, Tourism Coordinator for Mistissini and his appointment to the Hunting Fishing Trapper Committee of the Grand Council of the Crees/Cree Regional Authority, a position he has held for seven years. He is an avid hunter and fisherman and goes out on the land every opportunity he gets. If he is not on his trapline, you can find him driving balls on the golf course.

His journey has led him to being the President of the Cree Construction and Development Company, a position he has held since 2002. The company was founded in 1976, and remains 100% Cree-owned and has contributed to shaping the communities and economic infrastructures of James Bay, Ontario and Manitoba. He takes great pride in the fact that 45-60% of the employees are Cree. Training is always on-going, therefore, continually impacting the socio-economic face of the communities and regions. The company has become one of the largest and most successful construction companies in Quebec. Gestion ADC, the sister catering and janitorial services company, was ranked in PROFIT 2008's Most profitable companies in Quebec.

MacLeod currently sits as a Board member on all the joint ventures CCDC establishes. He was appointed to Vice President of the Cree Jobs Partnership (CJP) Initiative with Emploi-Québec, aimed to train over 300 Cree people in the various construction professions. This goal will be achieved by March 2012 at which time the program will expire.

He continuously strives to pursue new business opportunities and this is demonstrated in the groundbreaking partnerships throughout the James Bay territory and across Canada.

CREECO on CCDC

Jack Blacksmith, the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises Company president, sees where the CCDC fits into CREECO as it was the first Cree entity to emerge and in a sense, the reason for other entities to emerge.

Blacksmith explained that the CCDC was the first regional company that was created by the Crees in 1976-77 and it was formed so that the Crees could get a shot at some of the Hydro-Québec contracts. This happened at a time when the Crees didn't have many skills when it came to operating machinery but they made do and started with clear cutting.

It was the CCDC that brought in the opportunities to hire subcontractors and then assist their own communities in getting these contracts. Blacksmith said while the CCDC has seen its growing pains, what it has accomplished is truly spectacular.

"It has been very successful and as we talk today, it is probably one of the oldest construction companies in all of Quebec. So, it has existed for a long time, and, like I said, when we started to acquire expertise with other project managers in Cree construction, we were able to do other things. We built the Route du Nord – it was Cree Construction that did that. We participated in dam repairs and dyke rebuilding. We did housing, sewage and built offices, airports and schools. This company has grown to become an incredibly good company for the Crees," said Blacksmith.

At the same time, when it comes to CREECO entities, it was the CCDC that blazed the trail for CREECO's other entities and created the reason for the existence of many of these businesses. CREECO itself wasn't even formed until the early 1980s, years after CCDC was already in business.

It was the expertise that the CCDC acquired when it came to setting up contracts and negotiating them that the other companies were able to draw from.

"There's not a single contract that we would walk away from because we are recognized as a good company. And if we land those contracts, there is no problem finding the expertise necessary to help us with these contracts," said Blacksmith.

A prime example of this was how the CCDC originally formed a joint venture with an ailing company called Gestion ADC to provide janitorial and catering

Installation de treillis - Nemaska

services. The CCDC eventually bought the controlling shares of that company and turned it into a successful 100% Cree-owned operation that is leading in its field.

Gestion ADC

According to Anthony MacLeod, Director of Gestion ADC, the catering and janitorial services company was a perfect fit as a subsidiary under the CCDC since the industries at times go hand-in-hand, particularly where work camps are involved.

"When you look at a project, the first thing you look at is the work itself and then the construction workers who need to be housed. For that you need facilities and their upkeep plus you have to feed these workers and this is where we come in," said MacLeod.

MacLeod explained how one became part of the other. Originally, the CCDC started up a joint venture with Domco Food Services in 1993 to provide these services to a project. Initially Domco was in a 50-50 partnership with CCDC but when the company began experiencing financial difficulty in 1996, CCDC bought out Domco's shares to create a new 100%-owned Cree company.

Since that time ADC has flourished, expanding significantly and being recognized time and time again for its excellence.

In 2008, ADC was recognized as one of Canada's fastest-growing companies by PROFIT magazine as part of the 20th annual PROFIT 100. The company ranked 27th among Quebec companies and 196th overall.

What is particularly interesting about this is that ADC was the first Native-owned company to make this prestigious list and so being awarded this honour raised the company's profile across the country.

Taking over Gestion ADC also opened up a whole new field of employment for Crees in Eeyou Istchee as those with a flair for cuisine could find stable work in the many cafeterias that the company operates. Crees without job skills found themselves suddenly employable in the janitorial division and so these two areas have made an strong

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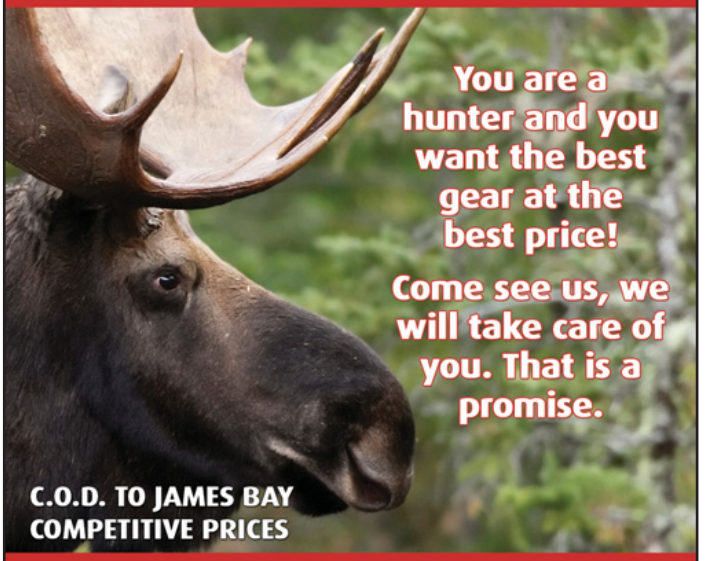

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Willy MacLeod, Jack Blacksmith and Albert Diamond

impact in the northern job market.

"We are a more diversified field than construction because this is an area that is very gender equalized. Construction tends to be very male dominated whereas cleaning and catering tends to be a little different," said MacLeod.

And, while Gestion ADC can work hand-in-hand with the CCDC to provide services on sites at work camps, it does not necessarily work exclusively with the construction company. Looking towards the future, MacLeod said the company has already set its sights on the new mining camps that will be opening up in the upcoming years as well as other Plan Nord projects that will require camp-management services.

At the same time, ADC is being sought after by other First Nations looking to acquire services from the company while trying to learn from their business model. MacLeod's division has no shortage of new potential on the horizon when it comes to future projects.

"We want to have a solid foundation in our home territory," said MacLeod.

Looking at 35 years of success for Cree and now other nations

According to Christian Sinclair, Director of Development, Marketing and Promotions for CCDC, he is proof of what the company can do for other First Nations as he came to work for the company through one of their joint ventures outside of Quebec.

Originally hailing from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation (Swampy Cree) in northern Manitoba, Sinclair was actually working for the Tataskweyak Cree Nation that had formed a joint venture with the CCDC known as United Cree Construction (UCC). For the last four years that UCC has been working on projects related to the next hydro project called Keeyask Hydro Dam, a project slated to start early next year.

"CCDC has met or exceeded those expectations of what it wanted 35 years ago.

The way we have done business has created a competitive market where other Cree businesses are also doing well in Eeyou Istchee. The CCDC model is something of interest to other First Nations across Canada and we have shared that expertise with them."

According to Sinclair, another exciting opportunity is upon the Cree once more with the Ring of Fire mining projects that are slated for northern Ontario. Already it has been estimated that the region is so abundant with valuable minerals that the projects could be ongoing for the next 100 years.

"We have taken the lessons we have learnt in the past and shared them with potential partners. That is one of our strengths and something we use to assist other First Nations in creating viable and successful companies. CCDC will continue to assist them when they negotiate with governments and businesses. Cree Construction has gone into the mainstream and the most recent project is the Lauder Stewart Project worth about $16 million," said Sinclair.

And, because the CCDC has a Manitoba base in the Taskewan Cree Nation, expanding further across the provinces can be much more easily facilitated.

"CCDC sees its experiences as a brand it wants to promote across Canada. The company wants people to know that it respects what they want as a people and a nation and it approaches this in a humble way that doesn't boast of achievements but shares knowledge and experiences in a traditional way. It wants to share a chance for a bright future not only for a community but for the youth that are the future," Sinclair stated.

But of course, Sinclair isn't CCDC's only imported employee. Along with having a largely Cree workforce, according to engineer Farid Amarene, who is CCDC's Director of Cost Control, Development and QMS, the company has employees from all over the world.

"CCDC is a very multicultural company. There are workers from Algeria, like me, from Argentina, Senegal, Trinidad, Morocco and Spain. These people are all engineers and this company is

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very attractive for engineers, there are 18 of us at this company" said Amarene.

Amarene started at CCDC as a project manager years ago and then became the director of QMS, which is an international Quality Management Standard. According to him, the CCDC is the first Native company to have achieved the QMS ISO standard.

"Certain clients in the North demand that the companies working for them are ISO certified and Hydro-Québec is one of those clients. We also have other clients who demand this standard. To become ISO certified it requires an external firm to come in and audit all of the processes of a project," said Amerene.

Having this certification has no doubt put the CCDC on the map as a quality company but also raised the bar when it comes to the kind of quality available in the North.

Expanding to the youth

While the CCDC has provided opportunities for hundreds of Crees over the last 35 years, as it continues to grow it has also provided room for up-and-comers in the Cree nation to blossom; Bella Loon, CCDC's Director of Human Resources, is one of them.

At 33 years old, Loon has found herself among the executive in CCDC, having rapidly climbed up the corporate ladder.

"I started working for CCDC five years ago as of September. I started off as a coordinator for Human Resources and in less than five months I was promoted to supervisor of the HR department. Another three months after that I was promoted to Director for the department and so within the first year of being employed by CCDC, I was promoted to a senior position," said Loon.

Shortly after obtaining her Business Administration certificate from Algonquin College in Ottawa, Loon began working for the CCDC, having been recruited by the company. She was able to take advantage of the company's coaching and mentoring program to ease her into her job and quickly learn the ropes. It is this kind of on-the-job training that gives the CCDC its strength.

"I can't honestly say that construction was the area that I had always wanted to go into as my focus was training and development. When I looked at my options, the CCDC, when compared to other employers, offered me the best chance at pursuing that interest.

"Obviously I came in not knowing much about construction as a business and that is where the coaching and mentoring came into play. This is something that we need to continue to develop, not only to help young professionals go into their desired careers but also to help guide others who may be undecided when it comes to choosing a career," said Loon.

It is with that in mind that the CCDC is creating and then strengthening its

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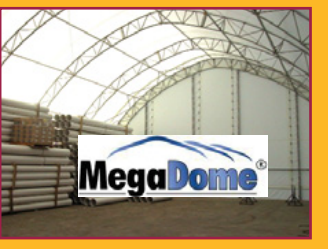

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new workforce in preparation for the massive boom that is coming with the Plan Nord projects. Between the Plan Nord, the public-works contracts from each community and then the ongoing demand for housing, the need for workers not only great but growing.

"We were looking at what the strategy would be for our focus over the next few years, especially with the mining industry booming. When it comes to construction within this field, we have to reposition ourselves as employers to be able to identify the best course or strategy to follow so that people of the Cree nation will benefit from the upcoming employment opportunities," said Loon.

With that in mind, Loon said that part of the company's strategy will be to see to it that workers get the kind of training they need from within their own communities as while some may be willing to travel for training, it can be costly and not everyone one is willing to do it. The CCDC instead is more interested in bringing the training to the workers and, with the volume of workers the company is looking to hire over the next few years, there will certainly be a demand for that training.

"Looking at the different numbers that have come out in terms of the kind of workers we are going to need and comparing them to the market right now, it is tough to say exactly how many people we will be hiring but I can say that it will be in the hundreds," said Loon.

Getting the training to the workers

It is one thing to want to hire a new Cree workforce to ensure that the people of the land get to benefit most from what will be happening to their territory, but training that workforce to be ready in time is a whole other story.

Thankfully that story is unfolding at this very moment in time as the entities within the Cree nation are coming together to make that happen with programs like the Cree Jobs Partnership (CJP).

"The Cree Jobs Partnership is a training society partnership that is formed between CREECO, Cree Human Resources Development and the Cree School Board. The purpose of the CJP is to create 420 possibilities for Aboriginal peoples within the CREECO companies, but more specifically within Air Creebec, Gestion ADC and CCDC," explained Stephen Forward, coordinator for the CJP.

Waskaganish Airport

According to Forward, the Partnership is training in the air transport, camp management and construction sectors and these programs are getting a large financial boost from funding partners Emploi-Québec and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Canada (ASETS).

Through the CJP, training has already begun in some of the communities so that workers will be ready as the demand for workers grows, specifically in the construction and camp management fields.

A prime example of this is an on-the-job training program that Forward said was already up and running in Chisasibi where the CJP is working to train cooks in a cafeteria in conjunction with an educational institution.

"There are really key benefits to this kind of on-the-job training program as people get to earn a living while upgrading their employability skills. This is a really good training program for an Aboriginal community as so many of the people that we train are young but already have families and so they can't afford to go to school and not have an income," said Forward.

Part of the CJP strategy is that it allows for a lot of flexibility when it comes to training, and this is something that neither partners CHRD or the School Board has the ability to offer independently. It is this kind of program in particular that will allow for these programs to be delivered on-the-job and outside of formal institutions that are far away from James Bay.

At the same time, Forward recognizes that it is a unique circumstance that has brought this wonderful opportunity forward. Only the entities within CREECO would actually have enough positions opening up collectively to be able to acquire this kind of funding while at the same time have enough work to fuel the job market for years to come. Plan Nord aside, the Cree communities have endless amounts of work to be done ranging from housing to municipal buildings to roadwork. Then there is the construction of the 10th Cree community, Washa Sibi, that is yet to happen.

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"Another important point is that the CCDC has played a crucial role in development. While it is looked at mainly as a construction company, the development part of its portfolio is very important. In speaking with William MacLeod, he has emphasized development many times," said Forward.

"We can train an institution, we can train building construction technicians and these individuals may end up being dispersed throughout the territory working for local bands, maintenance departments, local construction companies and the CCDC. We also work with their joint venture partners and so the locally owned construction companies in Eastmain, Chisasibi and other communities are also part of our program because we can draw their employees in and train them. From a development perspective, the CCDC is a good company to work with in terms of training employees," said Forward.

Lasting impacts

Through the kinds of partnerships and joint ventures that the CCDC has made throughout the Cree world, the land and its people have been changed for good and for the better.

According to Robert Kitchen, who sits on the Board of Directors for the Nemaska Eenou Company, working with the CCDC has led to a series of projects in everything from road maintenance to construction to infrastructure development.

While Kitchen explained that the company has seen its ebbs and flows with the kinds of work they have done over the last 20 years things are looking very positive right now because of its history.

"One thing I am very proud of is the transfer of knowledge that we have had within the community. That was one of the things we focused our energy on, training a lot of the young people who are there, the young women and men in the different fields that we are involved in.

"One example I can give is the technical service and maintenance that we are doing at the airport, this is all done by Crees. Our road maintenance, 95% of this is done by Crees, either from Mistissini or Nemaska. This is what we have been able to accomplish with our partnership," said Kitchen

And, the Nemaska Eenou Company is just one example of how partnering with the CCDC over the last 35 years has led to further development and growth within the Cree communities.

In its 35 years, the Cree nation's premier entity has given birth to many different careers, businesses, partnerships, joint ventures and major projects that it has literally changed the face of the Cree nation through development.

Church - Split Lake (MB)

Its success and consummate preparedness for the future have gone hand-in-hand to make the CCDC not only a Cree success story but provide a framework for other entities and businesses.

What may have started out as a bunch of Crees banding together for clear-cutting contracts in the mid-1970s has become a Native success story that will no doubt inspire generations of Crees and other First Nations across the country for years to come because when it gets down to it, they did it. They have arrived.

Poste de police à Chisasibi

"Half the Number of Players – Twice the Athlete"

Cree Nation takes the lead in the development of 6-a-side football in Quebec

By Daniel Coyle

The James Bay Eagles capped a successful 2011 football season with a Junior championship at the recent 6 Nations Challenge, held in Prince Edward Island in late August. But this isn't your typical brand of football.

The 6 Nations Challenge, launched in 2010, is an annual competition that brings together some of the best 6-a-side football teams from across Canada. Unlike traditional 12-man football, 6-a-side football programs are specifically designed for smaller communities that often do not have sufficient numbers of young people available to form competitive 12-man teams.

The man responsible for the James Bay Eagles' success is head coach Trevor Allen Monaghan. A Wemindji band member who grew up in Ottawa, Monaghan is a former quarterback at the University of Ottawa, where he also obtained a degree in Leisure Studies. Since his move to Chisasibi in 2008, Monaghan has worked as a personal trainer and manager of the community's fitness centre. But it becomes quickly evident when talking to Monaghan that it is football that is his passion.

"With the help of the Recreation Department in Chisasibi and Football Canada we decided that 6-a-side football would be a great way to introduce Cree youth to the game of football," said Monaghan. "It's a smaller version of the game, but it still has the same technical concepts as 12-man football, but with half the players."

While the game is relatively new in Quebec, 6-a-side football has been played in Saskatchewan for over 50 years, where 29 schools currently participate in programs across the province. Indeed, approximately half the players on the Saskatchewan team who participated in the 6 Nations Challenge were from First Nations communities. Other provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick also run programs.

Vincent MacDonald and Kwiisk Neacappo tackling the Summerside Spartan QB in Junior Football action. Eagles won 40-7.

"Saskatchewan is the leader in 6-a-side football. They have been playing for over 50 years and have a real stranglehold on the high level competition because they have a provincial championship each year," explained Monaghan. "But we are moving forward quickly with our program."

This year, the Eagles sent both Junior and Senior teams to the 6 Nations Challenge that faced teams from PEI and Saskatchewan. The Eagles' rapid development was evident as the Junior squad went undefeated, downing both PEI teams they faced by scores of 18-6 and 40-7. The Senior Eagles shut out PEI 33-0, but lost on the final play of the game

to Saskatchewan by a score of 20-13. This success has lead to plans to launch a Cree Nation Football League in 2012.

"Mistissini developed a football program this year with some of the former coaches from our program last year. We were able to play four games against Mistissini this year, culminating in the Big River Bowl in Chisasibi, which we won 34-32," said Monaghan. "We travelled back and forth four weeks in a row and the popularity grew from there."

Four games between two teams may be a humble beginning, but Monaghan and his counterparts in other Cree communities have ambitious plans for the future.

"We do have a format that is being developed with Football Canada and we are members of Football Quebec as of this year," Monaghan continued. "This means we are developing a football league for the future. We are looking at the developing at the younger ages with flag football and then thru Pee Wee, Bantam and Midget age with tackle football. We've spoken with Waswanipi and Wemindji Recreation Departments, and it's looking like we are expanding more each year."

To boost this development, Monaghan is leveraging his relationships at the University of Ottawa to hire students who will work next summer as coaches in the football program. The model that Monaghan is seeking to use with student coaches is based on the method that has already been used successfully in Saskatchewan.

"We have the only 6-a-side programs in Quebec that are recognized. So we are a bit ahead. But this is not just about Aboriginal communities trying to develop football players for themselves. We are trying to get more players involved by promoting 6-a-side football in smaller communities across Quebec," said Monaghan. "This is about developing players for Football Canada teams and for colleges and universities. To play football at a high level like the CFL, you need to go to college. So, even if you don't make it pro, you can still get an education as result of football."

A primary objective of the 6-a-side football program is developing the skill sets, discipline and experience necessary to excel at the 12-man game.

According to Monaghan, "Most of the kids that play 6-a-side football learn to play multiple positions. This develops them for the 12-man game. So, if they leave the community here they are better prepared to play at the competitive 12-man game. That's where we get the slogan 'half the number of players, twice the athlete'. "

Monaghan's program is already paying an early dividend. Chisasibi's George Neacappo, who played 6-a-side football with the James Bay Eagles, is making the leap to university football this season as a lineman with Monaghan's former squad, the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees.

#15 Jesse James Scipio catching a Touchdown pass in the 6 nation Challenge.

Monaghan sums up the program objectives enthusiastically. "We are developing athletes here and that's pretty neat."

2011 Eagles Team Picture: 1st Row (L to R) Kwiisk Neacappo, Jonathan Pashagumskum, Paul Bobbish, Andrew Martinhunter, Alex MacDonald, Vernon Neacappo, Timothy Rabbitskin, Louis Vincent Parent, Russell Pepabano, Ronald Washipabano, Jesse James Scipio. 2nd Row (L to R) Sanuel Loutitt, Samuel Sam, Terrence Mattawashish, Marc Scipio-Beauragard, Wesley Washipabano, Tyrone Longchap, Gabriel Audlarock, Ryan Saganash-Tremblay, Dwayne Dominique, Vincent MacDonald. 3rd Row (L to R) Assistant Coach Morgan Johnson-Koehn, Stephane Bearskin, Joshua Chiskamish, Benoit Longchap, Billy Scipio, Darryl Sam, Matthew Swallow Jr., Head Coach Trevor Monaghan. 4th Row (L to R) Josiah Chiskamish, Jordan Bobbish, Andy Wapachee, Tobio Scipio. Top Row Assistant Coach Philip Mattawashish.

Beyond infinity

The annual hot-air balloon festival is a sight to behold

Photos and story by Karim Mansour

Soaring through the sky, the morning mist below me blankets the earth. The cold breeze lashes my face as a stream of warm air pours down on me from above. My heart pounds with a rush of joy and adrenaline. These are the feelings and sights you get when you are placed high above the ground. If you are wondering what I am describing, it was my early-morning flight at the annual International Hot Air Balloon Festival in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, south of Montreal. This year I was given the chance to experience something heavenly – a trip in a hot-air balloon named Infinity.

This event is North America's preeminent hot-air balloon festival and Canada's greatest family event. This year the fest celebrated its 28th anniversary and etches its mark on the map as an attraction hub for the years to come.

Every August, the sky above Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu comes to life as 125 hot-air balloons take flight in the early hours of the morning. Early-bird risers can witness the spectacular sight of balloons flying in every direction.

In the afternoon, these hot-air balloons are inflated at the festival grounds in preparation for an evening flight, if the weather conditions permit.

Residents and bystanders gather on the streets that slowly turn into massive crowds as they watch the balloons float seamlessly across the sky with their vibrant, rainbow colours and shapes. As sunset arrives balloons land on farmland where the owners welcome them. In return for allowing them to land on their property, the pilots offer the owners a bottle of champagne and gas coupons.

During the festival, three nocturnal events took place – two featured special-shaped balloons and one was for regular balloons. The night was illuminated with the fiery glow of the hot-air balloons and with a whistle blow all of the balloons lit up.

Kathleen Jerome-Bérubé, Eric Mueller and Sophie Laviolette

Besides the ballooning, the festival offers other attractions and activities. This includes a series of concerts that are held every night for the duration of the festival featuring big-name entertainers. This year's participants were LMFAO, the LA-based dance-rap sensation with their hit song "Party Rock Anthem", who kicked off the festivities with a bang.

Other performers on the bill included Maxime Landry, Sean Paul, Eric Lapointe, Flo Rida and Pitbull. I thoroughly enjoyed the venues and made sure not to miss any of the shows as the vibe was just right.

Outside food courts were conveniently placed and served food from all corners of the globe, making this a truly international affair.

The balloon festival is an event that I will keep going to in the years to come and hope many others will attend the wonders of this inflatable spectacle. This most memorable impression I experienced was being able to grasp what man has always wanted to do – fly high in the sky. This life-changing encounter is certainly something I will never forget.

I am a balloon. My name is Infinity.

Hydlo and FRIENDS Online

UNDERSTAND, SHARE, CREATE

Discover another side of the Eastmain-1-A/Sarcelle powerhouse and Rupert diversion project.

Go behind the scenes with Jimmy and Tommy Neeposh, William K. Gunner-Eenatuck, Josie Jimiken, Robert Coonishish, Georges Bordeleau, Jérôme Gingras, Timothy Moses, Mylène Landry, Johnny Saganash and many others.

Browse the site and you'll be captivated by The right men, Future "rock stars" and Cree workers.

Explore our new Web site. Don't miss it.

www.hydloandfriends.com

"Remember this, and you will live a good life"
– Harry Moses

"This is our moment"

Crees meet in Montreal to plan their mining strategy

By Amy German

Even before Quebec's Plan Nord for northern development was fully unveiled this spring, Crees had already been looking at how to best take advantage of the unbelievable employment opportunities that will come with the development of so many major projects.

The biggest sector for the Crees will no doubt be mining, with four major projects happening throughout Eeyou Istchee.

In this vein, Crees from entities, like the Cree Construction and Development Company (CCDC), the Cree School Board, Cree Human Resources Development (CHRD), the Cree Regional Authority and other groups, congregated in Montreal for two days (September 7-8) to see how they can start planning for the future.

"There have been a lot of recent developments in Eeyou Istchee, particularly in mining and especially with the signing of the Wemindji Eleonore gold project agreement with Goldcorp. This has changed the face of mining development in Eeyou Istchee and everybody understands that we need to do something to get ready," said event co-chair Alfred Loon, head of Economic and Sustainable Development for the CRA.

Loon was co-chairing the event with Henry Mianscum, Director of CHRD.

Rather than simply presenting what is happening to these entities, Loon said the event was more about discussing how the Crees can prepare themselves and by that token get feedback from the different entities on what this will mean to each of them individually.

"Who we wanted to engage here was anyone who had an interest in mining. We have people here from the Health Board as they have concerns. We have someone from the Cree Trappers' Association because their members are going to be impacted. The School Board

is also here and that's because education is key to these projects," said Loon.

Loon said the need for the meeting, titled "This is Our Moment… Mining in Eeyou Istchee", came out of meetings that many of these entities had with several of the mining companies that will be starting projects in Eeyou Istchee in the coming years.

"We need to get information and we need to look at how we are going to plan all of this. Who is going to do what? In other words, I can say for lack of better words, we need to get our act together," said Loon.

At the event speakers were invited from northern Saskatchewan where the Cree communities there have already experienced a similar development boom. Loon said what came out of those presentations was that while those communities may already be in the middle of their own boom, the Crees in Quebec are not that far behind them as they already have various entities in place to provide the necessary support.

According to Michael Petawabano, CHRD's Coordinator of Territorial Programs, the employment potential resulting from the four major upcoming mining projects on the Cree territory will be incredible.

"We are looking at 1600 jobs for just the construction phase and then the production phase would need another 1500 people. This is a big undertaking and one of the big things that we were talking about is planning our strategy around that.

"This is talking about making sure that we can maximize the opportunities for employment and training and also the opportunity for development and that is the business part of it, those are the two points that we wanted to cover," said Petawabano.

His message to any Crees who are interested in benefitting from this mining employment boom is to start getting informed now by visiting the local Cree employment offices in their communities. People can start now by putting in their information as there will be employment not just in mining but also in other related fields and so there will be many opportunities to go around.

David's Journey

Our Cree Nation is young and vibrant. Like all Nations, we too need "Cree Champions". Cree Champions who believe in worthy causes. Cree Champions who are courageous, who are history makers and believers of helping others who are in need when there is nowhere else to turn too.

Cree Champions are individuals who have a passion to help their fellow Crees and will do whatever it takes to bring to light the plight and struggle of their fellowman.

There is a young man from Mistissini who lives in Chisasibi who has began a journey of awareness for families who have a family member living with cancer. This young Cree is David Coonishish. He is a Cree Champion with a cause.

My wife and I met David at Kilometre 10 on the James Bay Highway. I asked him, why he was rollerblading from Montreal to Chisasibi. In his own words he said, "I am doing this for families who need help when a member of their family is living with cancer." He also told me "that Crees have brought awareness to diabetes and it is now time to bring awareness of families dealing with cancer."

David has had his own fight with cancer and has beaten it. He has lost his own brother Michael to cancer and is very aware of the financial strain on families who want to see or be with their loved ones when treated down south.

Needless to say, I was deeply moved by this young man's passion and determination to bring awareness of what families go through when a family member has cancer.

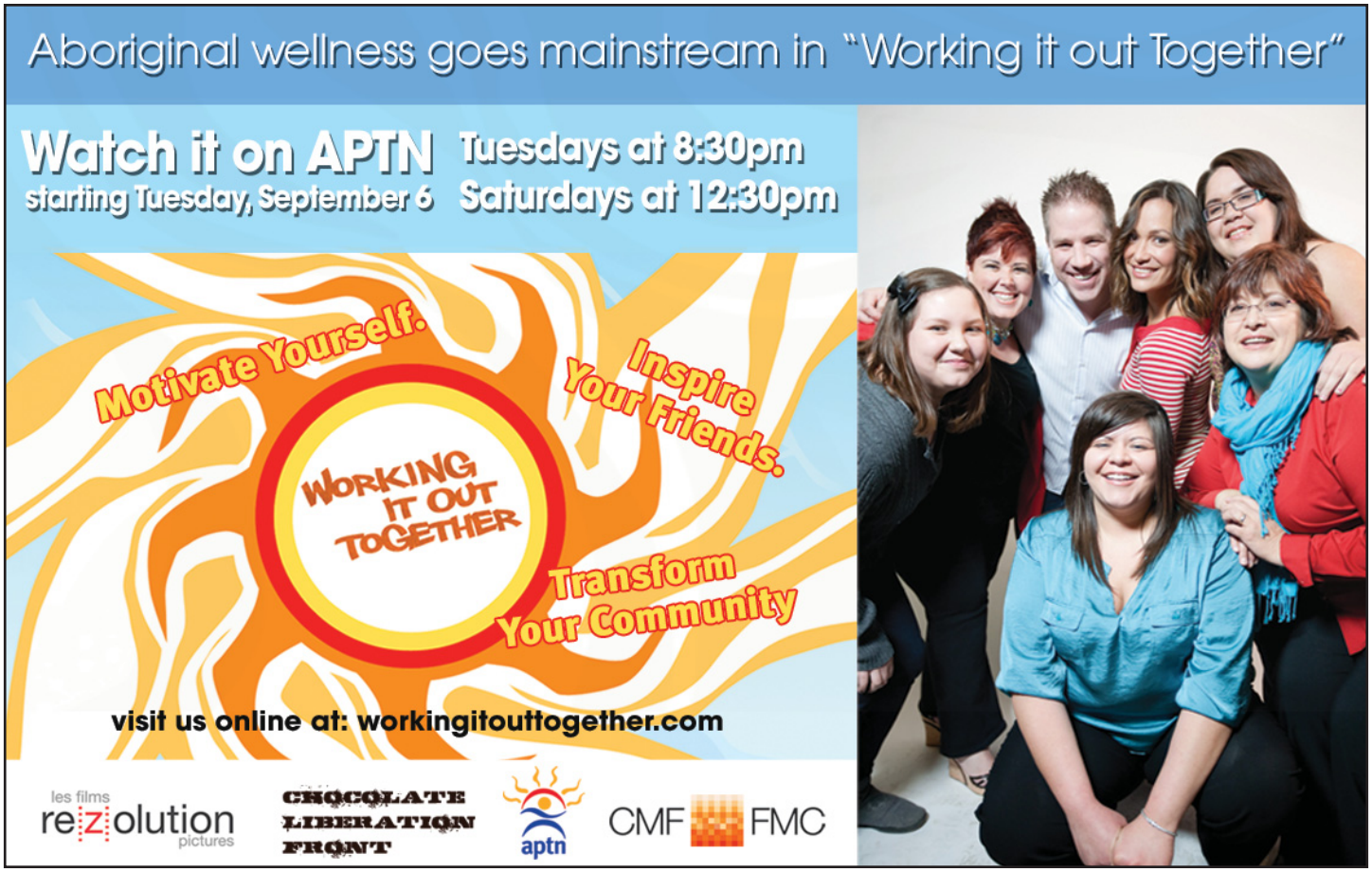
David Coonishish is now rollerblading into Eeyou Istchee. Let us show our support for him.

David is raising funds for the cause. I encourage you to contact Ashley Iserhoff or Bertie Wapachee for additional information and they can tell you where you can send your donation.

To the Cree leadership, please do what you can and I dare suggest that you make your way to the James Bay Highway to see and encourage David and his family. Maybe you can bring your own rollerblades and skate with him.

Many thanks for your support of "David's Journey." God bless the Cree Nation.

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come



Time to name names

By Lyle Stewart

As I write this evening, September 14, Radio-Canada and La Presse are reporting that a secret report by Quebec's so-called Anti-Collusion Unit has confirmed a system of rampant corruption, political kickbacks and cost inflation in public road construction in the province.

Like most folks here, I'm quite ready to believe this. I've been conditioned for years by media reports to accept this with little question. Even though, at this point, the material reported by Radio-Canada tonight contains no specific allegations – no names, dates, numbers, documents or testimony – much less anything else sharp-eyed viewers of Law and Order repeats would consider to be evidence of the open-and-shut-you're-guilty variety.

I am also pretty sure about is that this story will inevitably be turned around to blame the people who actually do the work. You know, the fat cat union members so often caricatured in our mainstream media. Meanwhile, the folks who really profit from construction industry corruption will for the most part go nameless, free to continue the age-old scams that help keep the political wheels greased in Quebec.

The leaked report says that the crooked practices are so widespread that they threaten to completely subvert parts of the provincial and some municipal governments.

"If the influence peddling intensifies in the political sphere, we would not be talking only of marginal criminal activities or even parallel ones, we could suspect an infiltration and even the takeover of certain functions in the government or municipalities," the report is quoted as saying.

Police found organized crime groups and biker gangs conspired with engineering and construction firms to pad road-building contracts. Part of the excess profits would be paid under the table to the company's employees, who would each contribute the maximum allowed to the party in power since, under Quebec's political financing laws, only individuals may make political contributions, and this, to a maximum of $3000 a year. So, for example, for a construction firm like the giant Axor, which was found guilty by Quebec's Director General of Elections of illegally giving $150,000 to the Liberals recently, that meant at least 50 employees or family members were in on the scam.

That's not the only reason road construction is so much more expensive here in Quebec, and it's not because of those unionized workers the columnists and talking heads love to despise; the report notes that cartels have been formed in various construction sectors. For instance, there are only two asphalt companies supplying the entire Montreal region, making it easy for them to inflate their prices. Would-be competitors are easily scared out of the marketplace by evening visits by portly gentlemen riding Harley-Davidsons.

As the head of the anti-collusion unit, former Montreal Police Chief Jacques Duscheneau, wrote in the report's preamble noted, "The suspicions are persistent to the point that a criminal empire was on the verge of being consolidated in the area of road construction."

> "WHICH BUREAUCRATS, POLITICIANS, BUSINESS OWNERS, ENGINEERS, MOBSTERS AND BIKERS ARE BILKING US?"

While Duscheneau does not name names in this report, he made it clear that we're not just talking about the governing Quebec Liberal Party; that illegal donations are also making their way to the Parti Québécois and even the Alliance Démocratique du Québec (ADQ). It's more than enough to trigger the ambient cynicism toward the provincial power structure, especially on the rightwing side of the spectrum.

What few commentators are picking up on is that the Charest government's vaunted practice of engaging in public-private partnerships – the so-called PPPs – are at the heart of the scandal. Because the government routinely contracts out its construction surveillance function to engineering firms, it has no expertise and no way of knowing if the job is truly being completed in an efficient, cost-effective manner. The engineering firms, or course, are either in on the scam or have been effectively intimidated by the mobbed-up construction companies from denouncing the corruption.

All this comes at a time that our transportation infrastructure is seriously degraded, long overdue for renewal. There are hundreds of billions of dollars to be spent on rebuilding roads, bridges and tunnels throughout the province over the next decade, so the stakes are extremely high. They're also high for Quebec's reputation. Already the rightwing press loves to ramp up the Quebec bashing, and this story will be so much more fuel for the fire.

So it's time the appropriate authorities started naming names: which bureaucrats, politicians, business owners, engineers, mobsters and bikers are bilking us? And why aren't they already in prison?

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Cree School Board
Commission scolaire Crie

CSB CHAIRPERSON ELECTION

Please take notice that the ELECTION for the office of the Chairperson of the Cree School Board has been called.

The schedule is as follows:

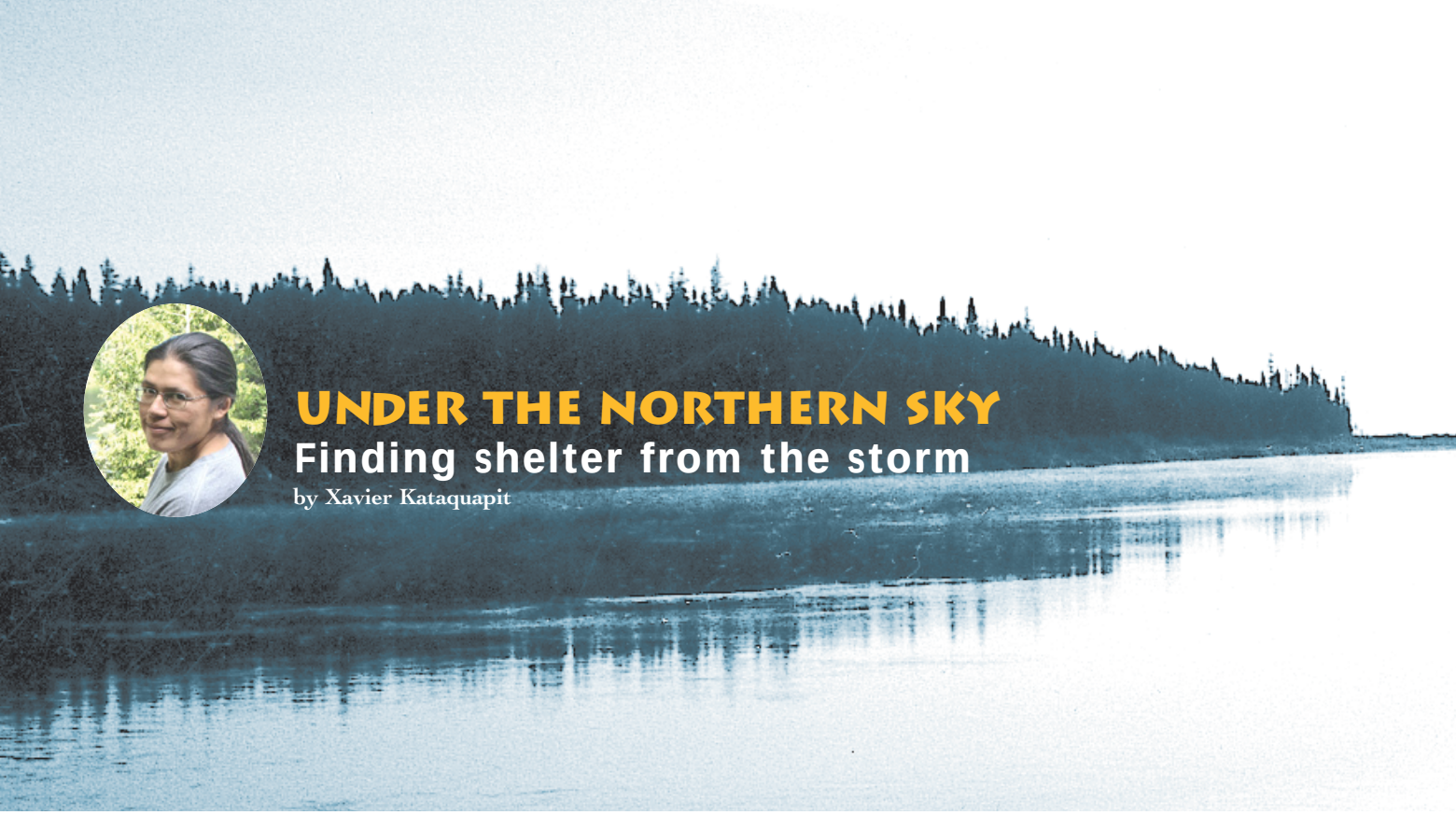
ADVANCE POLLS: **October 12, 2011**
ELECTION DATE: **October 19, 2011**

Please note that this position of Chairperson is a 10-month mandate only.

It is to finish the mandate of Gordon Blackned who recently became the new Chief of Waskaganish.

The elections for the full term Chairperson will take place in the summer of 2012.

For more information
please contact the Chief Returning Officer:
Mr. Kenny Loon at kennl@rogers.com



UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Finding shelter from the storm

by Xavier Kataquapit

I sat down at the cottage recently and looked outside a picture window that faced the lake. It was a cool afternoon and I watched the light fade under layers of dreary clouds that hung lazily overhead. I sat comfortable in my warm chair as I sipped on a cup of hot tea while being warmed by the crackling fire in the huge old stove. There's nothing like that feeling of coziness that you get when inside a comfy warm place with cold, wet weather situated on the other side of the window.

A cool wind blew in from the west and the pine branches on the towering trees nearby swayed under the force. A light misty rain showered the scene and I could almost feel the cold penetrating the forest. I sipped at my tea to relish in a little more warmth and I thought about times like these when I was a boy growing up on the James Bay coast.

I recalled one trip we took in September by freighter canoe to Akamiski Island. It was a late season voyage and we were taking advantage of a free weekend mom and dad had taken off from their work schedules. However, as we left town, we realized early on that the weather was not with us. Clouds hung low overhead pregnant with rain. A nasty cool north wind pierced our fall jackets but mom and dad consoled us with promises of sun and a blue sky. So we headed out.

The water was rough on the Attawapiskat River as we set forth in our freighter canoe and a cold rain pelted us as we made our way out onto the great saltwater James Bay. My brothers and sisters and I sheltered with mom under a layer of blue tarp along with all our supplies. Dad braved the rain and the saltwater sea-spray on his own at the controls of the outboard motor. He made light of the cruel weather and teased us in a game of peek-a-boo as we children ducked under the protective tarp. To keep us feeling safe he sang or more or less shouted religious hymns over the roar of his two-stroke motor. He seemed to enjoy the adrenalin rush he got from facing the storm.

When we finally landed on the southern pebble shore of Akamiski, our world was a misty rain, driven by a frigid wind and framed by dark clouds. My younger brothers and I stayed with the canoe and hung tight to the tarp to keep our supplies warm while our parents and my older siblings headed out to make camp. We watched patiently but anxiously as the prospector tent slowly sprouted on shore.

Once the tent was up, our older siblings came to fetch us and we scrambled for shore and the safety of the huge canvas tent. I recall falling happily on the soft pine boughs safe from the twirling storm outside. The light was fading fast and my parents and the older children raced to set up the little camp stove and fetch wood. As the light faded and the shadows bled away dad pulled out the Coleman lantern which he filled with fuel and primed. That swish-swish prime sound made me feel hopeful as the last threads of light left our world. In a matter of minutes, the lamp hissed to life and filled our dark tent with bright yellow light.

The next thing we knew our little camp stove was alive in a roaring fire. We had light, the heat of our stove, the protection of our old prospector tent and the comfort of a fresh pine bough floor. On this day our timing was perfect as the weather had taken a turn for the worse and the wind howled while heavy rain pelted the tent. I recall how good it felt to be in a cozy, warm place with a raging storm just a few inches away. Hopefully, I will always have the luxury of finding shelter from the storm.

CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED

We are looking for stories about strange sightings in the James Bay area. If you have any or know anyone who does, please contact us at Km509@rezolutionpictures.com

PERSONAL MESSAGES

For sale: a Polaris Ranger RZR 170 C.C (an all-terrain vehicle is for kids) only driven for 0.5 hours. Original sale price was $4900 but asking price is $3000. If interested please contact Russell Cheezo by phone at 819-977-0214 or by email at handicapper15@hotmail.com

To all my friends in Wemindji, I wish you a great "back to school" or "back at the daycare" with your groups. Miss you all! - J.D. (Josée Dodier)

To all my friends at the cree nation of mistissini: thank you for years of learning, working and having a great time laughing together at break times. Well, we laughed every chance we got actually (sorry hr!) Special thanks to "hottie", lou and emmy; i don't think i can put more names, there are too many. I'm gonna miss everyone and someday soon i will come over for break and bring a healthy snack like carrot sticks and dip!! From: robin campbell

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aiderefernce.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html

CLASSIFIEDS ARE FREE FOR EVERYONE

PERSONALS, BIRTHS, ANNIVERSARIES, MESSAGES, ETC.

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Edna L. Neeposh at 819.673.2600 ext. 327
Cell: 819.865.0078
By email eneeposh@cra.qc.ca

Registration Fee $150 Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner to be provided

Deadline September 30, 2011

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